

This is an illustration
of the spirit of controversy
that existed between
different denominations
of Christians, half a
century ago or more

This is a partial
presentation of
a controversy in
1857 at Andover
Mass

11.18.08.

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HOW SOME FOLKS CAN TALK!

If any one will take the trouble to read a piece signed Astley, in the Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, of July 19th, and then read the following, he will understand what is meant by the above caption: After the Rev. J. Franklin Walsh became the pastor in charge of the Methodist church at Paducah, Kentucky, for the present year, he, on several occasions, alluded to certain doctrines held by the Presbyterian Church in terms not to be misunderstood, and calculated to excite surprise, as well as sorrow, that any man professing to be an ambassador of Christ, should exhibit so inveterate hostility to doctrines held by many eminent christians in all ages. On one occasion, some time last spring, he spoke of everlasting purposes as "everlasting nonsense." In another of his violent attacks upon the doctrine of foreordination, which Mr. Astley is pleased to call fatalism, he remarked that to talk of eternal purposes, would, or was fit to, "cause a sneer in hell."

Now, when Mr. Walsh came to our town, the different denominations were at peace with each other; and members of one church, frequently attended worship at the house of another. After he had "opened his" mouth, and sent forth hot volleys of sarcasm and ridicule against what he called Calvinism, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church, thinking that the members of his charge ought to be always ready to give, to every man that asketh, a reason of the hope that was in them, preached three sermons, or rather a sermon in three parts, on the decrees of God. In this discourse, the pastor, (Rev. Mr. Senour,) quoted from the Articles of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the Confession of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, the Methodist Book of Discipline, from Wesley, and perhaps others, to prove that the Presbyterian Church was not altogether singular, with regard to all the points held by that church, concerning decrees, election, and reprobation. Another object at which he aimed, in quoting the Discipline, was to show that there was either inconsistency in the Discipline itself, or between it and some Methodist preachers. If he "misread" the Discipline he must have done so, through mistake, for he says

This article was written by Prof. J. F. Walsh, and is a def. of Mr. Senour.

he had the quotation, in the same words that are used in the Discipline, written down in his manuscript, and before his eyes while, he was preaching. The deduction drawn from the quotation is in the printed sermon, and certainly no false quotation would help the argument, as all who read and understand may see.

Mr. Senour did not speak disrespectfully of Methodist preachers, unless the following was disrespectful. Speaking of the Book of Discipline, he said: "In the very Book of Discipline that is carried, at least in the pocket, if not always in head, of every Methodist circuit rider." The word "little," before Methodist circuit rider, has since been interpolated by way of improvement. The only other passage against which a Methodist preacher could make any special complaint, on the score of disrespect, contained an allusion to the aforementioned happy expression, "a sneer in hell."

Mr. Walsh animadverted very roughly upon Mr. Senour's alleged iniquities concerning the quotations, and said some very hard things, charging him with wilful misrepresentation, and saying that he could no longer consider him a gentleman. This is the kind of "sharp rebuke" which Mr. Astley says that Mr. Walsh administered to the "Rev. gentleman." With what kind of feeling Mr. Walsh "administered" this "sharp rebuke" can be better judged by his words and manner than by Mr. Astley's assertion. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh." Some people thought that Mr. Walsh was very angry; and that Mr. Senour's conduct, bad as it was, had been greatly aggravated in the report. I say, "bad as it was." For Mr. Senour to presume to defend his own doctrine before his own church, and in the same town in which it had been abused, and (worse still) in which Mr. W. lived, and (worse of all) against Mr. W. himself, was too bad. And then, that he should summon to his aid the "very book of discipline," in this ugly work, was not to be endured. He must receive a "sharp rebuke," and be charged with "gross misrepresentation," and be denounced as no gentleman.

Some of Mr. Senour's brethren thought it might be well to publish the sermons which had produced such a "shaking among the dry bones," that people might see for themselves the awful things contained in them, and, also, get some correct information, if they wished it, concerning the "horrible doctrine" so often held up to terrify "the natives." The idea that "learned professional dignity was called to assist in the mighty undertaking," may perhaps be considered a compliment to the sermon; but among Mr. Senour's brethren, would hardly be considered a compliment to him. Having studied theology for some years before they undertake to instruct others in the "mysteries of godliness," Presbyterian ministers are generally able, single-handed, to defend their doctrine, at least against men of ordinary caliber. The man is not to be found, who can say with truth, that he assisted Mr. Senour in the composition of a single sentence, by the suggestion of a single thought, or by the selection of a single quotation, or by recommending to him or consulting for him, any author living or dead. The assertion of Astley is childish and ridiculous.

As to the review being "considered by the people here, a perfect demolisher of the gentleman and his sermons," that is all a pleasing dream existing only in the happy imagination of Mr. Astley. The gentleman himself is alive and in good health and spirits; and so far as people who do not look through a distorting medium, can see, his usefulness is not in the least impaired. I read somewhere once, of a horse which was induced to

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eat shavings by being made to wear over his eyes while feeding, a pair of green spectacles, which made the shavings look green, like grass. This is the happy state of Mr. Astley, who views Methodism as exceedingly prosperous all around him, and Presbyterianism in a hopeless condition. The sermons are still extant and can speak for themselves. The thing which the Presbyterians here desire, with reference to this subject, is, that as many people as possible may read both pamphlets that have been written on both sides of this controversy, in the order in which they were published. They are anxious that people may read and think, and decide for themselves whether Mr. Senour's sermons have been demolished or not. They care nothing about puffing their preacher; he does not need puffing. Let those who hear him preach, and those who read his pamphlets judge of his performances.

But this article is already too long. There are other absurdities in Mr. Astley's production, that might be noticed, if my time and your patience would allow. The last thing which I have to say is this. How Mr. Astley could say that Mr. S.'s sermons were placed any where "for sale on *commission*;" and how he could write all that paragraph in which he alludes to an article which appeared in the Paducah Journal, signed Protestant; and how he could say that "for years past Presbyterians have tried to gain the ascendancy in this place;"—how he could say these things and several others which he has said, and all the while think he was telling the truth, is incomprehensible to my mind, unless he had that funny pair of spectacles on.

H.

THE DECREES OF GOD;

A DISCOURSE,

BY

FAUNTLEROY SENOUR,

PASTOR OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

PADUCAH, KY.

(PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.)

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THE Sermon in the following pages was preached in the Presbyterian Church, at Paducah, in three parts, in May, 1852 ; and is offered to the public at the request of a number of friends, and not because the Author flatters himself that any new light is shed upon a subject that has occupied the minds and employed the pens of great and good men.

THE DECREES OF GOD.

“Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with MEEKNESS AND FEAR.”—[1 Peter, ch. iii, v. xv.]

This passage of scripture has not been selected so much for the purpose of confining my remarks to the exact spirit of the passage, as for another purpose. Contrary to my custom, it will be used as a motto in discussing an important and greatly controverted subject, viz: “The Decrees of God.”

This doctrine, as held by Presbyterians, has had, and still has, many bitter opponents, who, in the heat of debate, have accused us of heresy, and of “teaching the doctrines of devils.” In opposition, however, to all railing and calumny, true Presbyterians are firm believers in the doctrine of divine decrees, and it is hoped that they will remain steadfast in the faith of their fathers, until the Lord changes the Bible. In giving reasons for our faith, instead of giving railing for railing—as might easily be done—instead of using personalities and abusive language, I design, God helping me, dispassionately to discuss the subject proposed, with the spirit of christian kindness and courtesy; in other words, “I will give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in me, with MEEKNESS AND FEAR,” i. e. with the fear of God, but not of man, before me.

I am now to vindicate the Decrees of God, and show that the doctrine of the Presbyterian Church on this subject, is consonant with reason and revelation. For the sake of order, I will speak, first, of God’s General Decree; secondly, of the Decree of Election; thirdly, of the Decree of Reprobation; and, fourthly, will notice some of the objections commonly urged against this doctrine.

1. We are to consider, first, the General Decree of God. “What are the decrees of God?” This question, you will readily perceive, is the twelfth one of our Larger Catechism, and this is the answer: “God’s decrees are the wise, free, and holy acts of the counsel of his will, whereby, from all eternity, he hath, for his own glory, unchangably fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass in time, especially concerning angels and men.” Here it is necessary to remark that to decree, to purpose, to fore-ordain, to predestinate, are so nearly the same in meaning that they will be used as synonymous terms.

Now for the proof that “God has from eternity fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.”

First—It may be argued from the intelligence of God. No man can doubt that God is an intelligent being, for this attribute of his character is fully manifested in his word and works. Consider what this means. “An intelligent being is one who knows and judges, who purposes ends and devises means, who acts from design, conceives a plan, and then proceeds to execute it.” Then, if God is an intelligent being and the creator of all things, as he is represented in his word to be, nothing ever came into existence without his knowledge and EFFICIENT or PERMISSIVE purpose, or his direct or indirect agency. If God is an intelligent being, before he created the universe he must have formed some plan or purpose to create.

Why, even among men, he who acts without a fixed plan or purpose, is suspected of idiocy. No man of intelligence acts without a purpose. If he designs building a house, the intelligent man forms a plan and has a purpose before he commences the work. The intelligent husbandman never acts without a plan. Before cultivating his fields, he forms his plans, and then follows his purposes, or plans that he may accomplish them. So God being infinite in intelligence, never acts without first forming a purpose to act. For example—before God created the world he formed a purpose to create, and being infinite in power, he executed that purpose. Before the creation of man, God willed or purposed to create him, endowed with certain faculties—who, when placed under certain circumstances, would act in a given way; hence the purpose of God to create man, extended not only to the body but to the mind; so that it may be said in truth, that the decree or purpose of God extended to the actions of men, moral as well as physical. Now, then, if God is the creator of all things in the material or the immaterial universe, as an intelligent being he must, before creating, have formed some plan, and that plan or purpose was his decree—and this is what is meant when we say that “God has decreed or fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass.” When we speak of God’s “fore-ordaining,” we mean nothing “mysterious or profound, but merely that, before acting, God willed to act; that his operations, *AD EXTRA*, were not the effects of necessity, but of counsel and design.” I call attention to this point—it is not asserted that God fore-ordained or pre-determined *EFFICIENTLY TO PRODUCE* “whatsoever comes to pass in time.” For example—God did not efficiently fore-ordain the fall of our first parents, and all the wickedness that has, as a consequence, since existed. But God created them, placed them in certain circumstances, in which circumstances they were permitted to fall. So that while the sin of the fall was their own, God willed to permit, but not to cause it; and thus God cannot be charged with being the author of sin.

Second—That “God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass,” may be argued from his fore-knowledge. That God is “infinite in knowledge,” most christians readily admit. Then, from all eternity God fore-knew every event that has taken place, or may take place in time; but how was it possible to know, with unerring certainty, that any event would occur, unless that event was purposed, fore-ordained, and placed beyond any contingency? To this argument, *WHICH NEVER HAS BEEN ANSWERED*, I call particular attention. If God fore-knew from all eternity every event that has occurred, or may occur in time, then every event of time must have been fore-ordained; for it is utterly impossible that God could have fore-known the existence of any event, if the certainty of its future existence was not fixed or purposed in the mind of God. For example—God knew from eternity that our earth was to have an existence, but how could he have known infallibly that the earth would be created, unless it was definitely settled that it should be created? If there was any uncertainty about the event, if it was not decreed, then God could not have known its future existence with unerring certainty. God fore-knew the existence of man—but if he fore-knew with certainty his existence, was it not definitely settled that he was to exist, long before his existence? If so, then man’s existence was fore-ordained. Then, since God infallibly fore-knew from eternity every event that has taken place, or will take place in time, then every event that has existed or that may exist, was from eternity unchangeably fore-ordained. But we are not left to the dictates of reason alone on this subject. In the Word of God we are taught that many events were

not only fore-known or fore-ordained, but actually predicted, and in some instances even hundreds of years before the fulfillment of the prediction. For example—it was predicted that Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire, defended as it was by a surrounding wall sixty miles in circumference and one hundred feet high, should be destroyed. It was distinctly foretold by the Lord through his prophet Nahum, that Nineveh should be destroyed, while its inhabitants were DRUNK, and that too by the SWORD, by WATER and by FIRE. Josephus informs us that all the things that the prophet predicted came to pass one hundred and fifteen years after the prediction. Then, as the destruction of Nineveh was fore-known to God and fore-told through his prophet, it is clear that it was fore-ordained or predestinated. If the event was not fixed, definitely settled, then it might not have taken place according to the prediction, and in that event the prophecy would have been false. Thus every prophecy in the Bible proves clearly that the events predicted or fore-known were also fore-ordained—for if the fulfillment of prophecies was not placed beyond uncertainty, then they may never have been fulfilled, and this would prove that God was a false prophet. Take the position, then, that all the predictions of the Bible were settled, and were certainly to occur as predicted, then you admit fore-ordination or predestination. If you say they might not have occurred as predicted, then you make God a false prophet. Here, again, as an answer to this argument, we are told that if God fore-ordains every event he must fore-ordain sinful actions. If the destruction of Nineveh was fore-ordained, in part by the SWORD, cruelty must have been fore-ordained; for it was practiced in the destruction of that city. Not so; just so far as the Medes and Babylonians were sinful, just so far were they its authors, and God purposed or decreed to PERMIT them to act as they did, which act he had power to prevent, but not wishing to interfere with their free agency, he determined to permit it and over-rule it for his own glory. But I am anticipating a point that is to be more fully discussed in another part of this subject. There is but one possible way of evading the argument founded upon the fore-knowledge of God. That way has been pointed out by Dr. Adam Clark in his Commentary; where, in my opinion, he denies the fore-knowledge of God. He says there are some things which God does not “choose” to know, (as if he must not first know them, before he can determine that he will not know them.) Thus this learned Commentator, rather than admit that God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass, is forced to take refuge in a self-destructive argument, and to deny the infinite fore-knowledge of God; for, according to this argument, there are certain things of which God is ignorant. These arguments are sufficient to establish the proposition “that God has decreed whatsoever comes to pass.”

ELECTION.

II. Your attention will be directed, in the second place, to the Decree of Election, or the special decree of God concerning men, which is thus expressed in the answer to the 13th question of the Larger Catechism: “God, by an eternal and immutable decree, hath chosen some men to eternal life.” Not all of our Armenian brethren will deny that God has a chosen or elect people, but say they are elected in time. Here we join issue with them, and say that they were elected from eternity. For the proof of our position we appeal to the Word of God, and if we fail to show that the doctrine is here taught, we will forever abandon it. On the con-

rary, if it is found written on the pages of God's holy book, we can never give it up until we are prepared to give up the Bible, and sooner than do that we would give up life.

1st—We appeal first to a number of scripture passages in which we believe the doctrine is clearly taught. "Be not thou ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus BEFORE THE WORLD BEGAN."—2d Tim., ch. i, v. 8, 9. "For whom he did fore-know, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his son. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified."—Rom. ch. 8, v. 28, 30. Still more : "According as he hath chosen us in him, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love ; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved."—Eph., ch. i, v. 4, 6. Judge from these proofs whether christians are elected in time or from eternity. As further proof that "God has by eternal decree chosen some men to eternal life," attend to the reading of the following passages in the word of God : "When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord; and as many as were ordained to eternal life, believed,"—Acts ch. xiii, v. 48. "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace."—Romans ch. xi, v. 5. Again, ("For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God, according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth ;) it was said the elder should serve the younger."—Rom. ch. ix, v. 11, 12. (See also Mat. ch. xxiv, v. 22 ; John, ch. xiii, v. 18, ch. 15, v. 16 ; Rom., ch. viii, v. 28 ; 1st Thes., ch. i, v. 4, ; 2d Thes., ch. ii, v. 13 ; 1st Peter, ch. i, v. 2.) If these various passages of Scripture do not teach the doctrine of election, tell me what they mean ? Do not pass over them hastily, but enquire upon your knees for the meaning, and if you find them containing this doctrine then receive it as a doctrine of the Bible.

This doctrine is clearly taught in all those promises of the enlargement of the kingdom of Christ. In one place we find the promise, "Ask of me, and I will give the heathen for thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." How could God promise to give to his son "the heathen," if there was any probability that the promise would not be realized ? If it was not settled, fore-ordained, that the Saviour was to have the heathen for his inheritance, how could God make a promise upon an uncertainty ? Is it not God-dishonoring to say that he would make a promise that might never be fulfilled ? If we say that the promises of God will never fail, then their fulfilment is fixed. If God has promised to save a portion of our race, (and none but a Universalist will say that he will save all men,) then that promise will be fulfilled, and every one that God has promised to save, or has given to his son for an inheritance, will be saved. What is this, if not the choosing of some men to eternal life ?

2d—This doctrine may be further argued from the unchangableness of God. In Malachi we find [ch. iii, v. 6,] it written : "I am the Lord, I change not." God, then, is an unchangable being. If so, he has neither purposes nor plans now that he did not have from eternity. If it is God's purpose now to have a Day of Judgment, then it was his purpose from

eternity. If it is now God's purpose to condemn the wicked and save the righteous, (if God is unchangeable,) it was his purpose from eternity. If you assert that God now purposes to save one being whom he did not purpose to save from eternity, you assert that he has new purposes; if new purposes, then God is not unchangeable, and the passage quoted from Malachi is false. True, we are taught in the Bible that God changes his treatment to men, but that implies no change in the character of God, for every change of treatment to man, whatever that change may be, is only in accordance with God's eternal unchangeable purpose. God has no new purposes, if unchangeable. He purposes now to save none that he did not purpose to save from eternity; hence our venerable Confession of Faith says, speaking of the elect, that "their number is so certain and definite that it cannot be either increased or diminished." Deny this position, and to what awful consequences will this denial lead! If it is said that God changes, for example, his purposes respecting the salvation of men, so that as they change from a state of sin to one of holiness, or from holiness to sin, he also changes his purpose respecting them just in accordance with their changes, does not that make the will of God subservient to the will of man? Here is a man that God purposes to-day to destroy, but to-morrow he repents, and then God purposes to save him; the next day, according to the views of some Armenians, he may fall from grace so far that God will blot his name out of the Book of Life, and on the day following he may repent again, and again God changes his purpose and writes his name again in the Book of Life. Does not this make the will of God dependant on the will of man, and take from him that high and glorious character everywhere ascribed to him in his word and works? According to this, instead of God moving according to his own will or purpose, he moves according to the will of capricious man. Talk and vociferate about the "horrible doctrine of election," as is the custom of some, what can be more horrible than making the will and actions of the great and glorious God subservient to the will of capricious, fallen and degraded man? Does it not drag God from the throne of the universe and seek to exalt man in his place? Admit that God is unchangeable, and you admit the doctrine for which we contend. Such is some, probably not a tythe of the proof, that might be given in support of the doctrine of election.

This doctrine is not peculiar to the Presbyterian Church, for there are other denominations that teach the doctrine of election in their standards. Some of the ablest advocates of this doctrine have been found among our Episcopal brethren, It is contained in the seventeenth number of the "Articles of their Religion," which reads thus: "Predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundations of the world were laid) he hath constantly decreed by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation, those whom he hath chosen in Christ out of mankind, and to bring them by Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to honor," etc., etc.

The doctrine is clearly taught, in my opinion, in the Confession of our Cumberland brethren. Indeed, it is no easy matter to copy, as they have done, a great portion of our Confession of Faith, without copying at least some Presbyterianism; for the entire system of doctrinal truths in our book form a perfect chain, every single link of which is essential to every other link. The doctrine of election is contained in the answer to the seventh question of the Cumberland Catechism. If what is stated in that answer is true, that "GOD HAS FORE-ORDAINED TO BRING TO PASS WHAT

SHALL BE FOR HIS OWN GLORY," then the conclusion cannot be avoided that God has fore-ordained the salvation of all that will finally be saved. Is not the salvation of sinners for the GLORY OF GOD? then "God has fore-ordained to bring it to pass," according to the answer to the seventh question of the Cumberland Catechism. Is not this election? Again—the doctrine is contained in the eighth chapter of their Confession of Faith, sec. 1, which is as follows: "It has pleased God to choose the Lord Jesus Christ, his only begotten son, who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, to be the Mediator between God and man, etc., unto whom he promised a seed, and to be by him in time redeemed," etc., etc. According to this article, the "Lord Jesus was chosen and fore-ordained before the foundation of the world," before man was in existence, and unto him he gave a SEED to be by him in time redeemed. Whom did God give to his son before the foundation of the world, to be redeemed in time? ANSWER, A SEED!! Who was that seed that was to be redeemed in time? Not every one—for that would prove Universalism. Who, then, was that SEED? Evidently christians, and they were given to Christ, according to our Cumberland brethren's own statement, thousands of years before they were born, or before the foundation of the world. If this is not the doctrine of election, it would be difficult to state it without using the "unpopular word elect." It may sound somewhat strange to state, that, as much as this doctrine and its advocates have been abused by some of our Methodist brethren, the great founder of Methodism himself taught the doctrine of election, whether intentional or not or whether consistently with statements made, in his sermon "on free grace," I cannot say: in which he says of Calvinism "that it represents the most holy God as worse than the devil." The truth is, it is difficult to reject Calvinism in practice. The doctrine of election is taught, in my opinion—whether INTENTIONAL OR NOT I cannot say—in the very book of discipline, that is carried at least in the pocket, if not always in the head, of every Methodist circuit rider. But you ask for the proof of these assertions—that is right. Take no man's assertion for argument or for authority. Here is the proof. Rev. John Wesley, in the third volume of his works, page 289, says: "With regard to unconditional election, I believe that God has unconditionally elected some persons to many peculiar advantages, both with regard to TEMPORAL and SPIRITUAL things; and I do not deny, (though I cannot prove it so,) that he has unconditionally elected some persons to eternal glory." Here it is expressly stated that God ELECTS some persons to peculiar advantages, temporal and spiritual. The spiritual advantages to which men are unconditionally elected, are the means of their salvation: then they who are thus ELECTED unconditionally to spiritual advantages, are elected to salvation. If God unconditionally gives to me advantages, that he withholds from others, and the advantages thus given are the means of my salvation, is not this distinguishing grace? and if so, then here is the good old doctrine of election. Wesley, seeing that if he admitted that some were elected to peculiar spiritual advantages, it would be folly to deny that some were elected unconditionally to eternal glory. therefore adds: "I do not deny, though I cannot prove it so, that he (God) has unconditionally elected some to eternal glory." In the book of Discipline of our Methodist brethren, under the head of "the ministration of Baptism to infants," the Minister is directed to offer the following prayer, viz: "Grant that this child now to be baptized may receive the fullness of thy graces, and ever remain in the number of thy faithful and ELECT children." Is it not here clearly taught that God has ELECT children?

If not; why speak of the number of elect, if there is no such number or class of beings? The doctrine of electing or distinguishing grace is taught by fair implication in the eighth article of the book of Discipline, just referred to, in which "the condition of man after the fall of Adam" is represented as such, "that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith and calling upon God," and that he has no power to do good works without the grace of God. Now, then, if man's condition is such since the fall, that he cannot make himself a christian, but is entirely dependent upon the grace of God, how can you account for the fact that some have such a sufficiency of grace as to make them christians, while many others are left in their sins to perish? If all have an equal amount of grace, then all will be christians; if all do not have an equal amount, then here is a distinguishing grace, by which all who have it are saved, and what is this but electing grace? We make these statements not to prove the truth of the doctrine now under consideration, but to show that the abuse heaped upon Presbyterians, by some, on account of this doctrine, comes with ill grace from those whose standards contain the same doctrine, not in word, but in spirit; and if they will preach according to their books, to which they profess to subscribe, we will not find fault with them.

REPROBATION.

III. In the third place, we are to consider the Decree of Reprobation, or the remaining part of the answer to the thirteenth question of our Larger Catechism, which is as follows: "God hath passed by the rest, (the non-elect) to dishonor and wrath, to be for THEIR SIN inflicted to the praise of the glory of his justice." This part of the answer needs no proof, if what has already been said is true. But as this doctrine has been greatly misrepresented and caricatured, it may be well not to dismiss the subject too hastily.

I will first state our views negatively and then positively.

1st.—Negatively—We do not believe, as some anti-Presbyterians affirm we do, that God has created many of our race, say nine out of ten, for the express purpose of destroying them eternally in hell, without any respect to works or sin in the creature. We teach no such doctrine. It cannot be found in our Confession of Faith, nor in the writings of any Presbyterian, from the writings of that great predestinarian, the Apostle Paul, down to Calvin, and from Calvin down to the writers of the present day.

We give not bare assertions, after the manner of some of our opponents, for arguments or authority. To show that Presbyterians do not teach that God has determined to destroy many or any of our race, without any respect to sin, you are reminded of what is said in the answer to the 13th question of our Larger Catechism, where it speaks of those whom God "hath passed by, and fore-ordained to dishonor and wrath, to be for their sin inflicted." Here it is taught that God determined to punish some men, not without, but for sin. The Synod of Dort, which met in the year 1618, and then represented the Calvinistic world, in the 1st chapter of the Acts of the Synod and 15th section, speaking of the decree of reprobation, says: "This is the decree of reprobation which determines that God is in no wise the AUTHOR OF SIN, (which to be thought of is blasphemy)." To these we might add other authorities, but let these suffice for the present. There are some who seem so determined to fix upon Presbyterians the atrocious doctrine that God has "determined to damn a

portion of our race without respect to works or sin," that they are unwilling to take our standards as a full and fair exposition of our faith; and to fasten this odium upon us, they seek to fasten upon us the writings and opinions of Calvin. Why sirs, why make us responsible for the writings and opinions of Calvin? The Presbyterian Church did not originate with Calvin as the Methodist Church did with Mr. Wesley. Our Church can be traced back to an earlier date. It originated, as we believe, with Christ and his Apostles. At the same time we venerate the name of Calvin, because he was a great and good man, an able defender and expounder of the Word of God, a hero in the great Reformation, who stood as firmly in opposition to the powers of darkness and "the man of sin" as the everlasting Alps with which he was surrounded. But it is said your Presbyterian Board of Publication has published his Institutes. Read the preface of the Board, and you will find that they do not subscribe to every thing stated in his work. So that if it is proved that Calvin taught that God destroys many of our race, regardless of sin, you cannot make the Presbyterian Church responsible for that. The truth is Calvin never taught the doctrine for which our very charitable opponents would hold us responsible, if we are to take his word in preference to theirs, as recorded in his work on "Secret Providence," pages 17, 18, 27, where he expressly denies that God predestinates any to destruction REGARDLESS OF SIN. Thus it appears that the charge so often made against Presbyterians, which too has created so much prejudice against them, so far from proving that they teach that God has created a large portion of our race, expressly for the purpose of damning them, with or without sin, comes much nearer proving that "there is something rotten in Denmark," or that they who make the charge have none to spare of that charity that "thinketh no evil." I have now stated negatively what is meant by the decree of Reprobation; we do not mean that God has decreed to destroy any human being without regard to sin.

2d—I will now state positively what we mean when we say, "that God has passed by and fore-ordained many to wrath to be for THEIR SINS inflicted," etc.

Our standards carefully distinguish between the EFFICIENT and PERMISSIVE decree of God. While God unconditionally, as to human merit, elected some of our race to eternal life, he permitted others to go on in sin, and determined to punish them for their sin. In other words, while God did not originate sin, he permitted its existence—while he did not cause any of our race to sin, he has permitted many to sin, and justly has determined to punish them for sins committed of their own free choice. This conclusion cannot be avoided, that God purposed, decreed or willed to permit the existence of sin. Deny this, and you drive me to Atheism. No man can deny this, without denying the existence of a God, such a being as the God of the Bible is represented to be. He is there represented as a sovereign. "He doth all things according to his will in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay his hand, or say unto him what doest thou."—Dan. ch. iv. v. 35. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power, for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."—Rev. ch. iv. v. 11. Here God's sovereignty is taught. Deny, then, that God either created or PERMITTED everything that exists to be created, and you deny his sovereignty. Deny, for example, that God permitted the existence of Satan, and you certainly deny his sovereignty. If Satan did not exist by the permission of God, then he existed without it; or, in other words, came into existence con-

trary to God's will, and if he existed contrary to the will of God, then Satan had power equal, if not superior, to God; for according to this he came into existence contrary to God's will, who would have prevented his existence if he could have done so. Does not this make Satan equal, if not superior to God? Again, God must have been prior to all other existence; in other words, there was a period when no other being existed but the First Great Cause of all beings. Then no being could possibly have existed without the will or permission of God. For example—there was a period when angels did not exist; could they ever have had an existence without the permission of God? If so, then they were independent of God, and he is not the sovereign of heaven and earth. There was a period when man did not exist; could he ever have existed without the will of God? There was a period when he was sinless, and a time when Satan entered the garden of Eden, and thus introduced sin and all our wretchedness. But did not God purpose to permit that event? If you say he did not, you then say that he had not power to prevent it. If God permitted the event, then he permitted the introduction of sin into our world; and because men became sinful wilfully, and God punishes them for their sins, does that prove that God created them for the purpose of destroying them? Bearing in mind the distinction between the efficient and permissive decree of God, you will not look upon the decree of reprobation as that horrible doctrine that it is sometimes represented to be. God, fore-seeing from all eternity that a portion of our race would never repent, but would of their own free choice live in sin, he from eternity determined to permit them to pursue their own course, and thus work out their own destruction. This is the decree of reprobation.

After all that has been said, Presbyterians are not so very much more heretodox than some other denominations on this subject. In some of their published doctrines, we find them teaching just what we teach, that God permitted the existence of sin, and fore-seeing sinners from eternity, he determined to punish them for sin.

Our Cumberland brethren in the answer to the seventh question of their Catechism, tell us that God "hath fore-ordained to bring to pass what shall be for his own glory." Let us ask, what is for the glory of God? For an answer to this question turn to their Confession of Faith, ch. xxxiii, sec. 2, where we are taught that God hath appointed a Day of Judgment "for the manifestation of the glory of his mercy," in the salvation of believers, and for the manifestation of the glory of his justice, in the damnation of reprobates. Then, if God has appointed a Day of Judgment for the manifestation of the glory of his justice in the destruction of the wicked, that was fore-ordained, according to the answer to the seventh question of the Catechism already quoted from. Here, then, is the doctrine of reprobation. (See also Cumberland Confession of Faith, ch. v, sec. 4.) We must not leave our Cumberland brethren without company. In a volume of doctrinal tracts published by authority of the General Conference of the Methodist Church, and on page 139, we find this language: "God predestinates or fore-appoints all disobedient unbelievers to damnation, not without, but according to his fore-knowledge of all their works from the foundation of the world." On page 140 it is said: "God refused or reprobated all disobedient unbelievers as such to damnation." Here, then, is the doctrine of reprobation in terms quite as strong as any in our own book, and, indeed, a little stronger—for while we here find the very word REPROBATE, it cannot be found in our Confession of Faith, or in the Larger

or Shorter Catechism. You may find the word reprobate in a number of scripture quotations in the margin of our Confession, and once in the index, but nowhere else. In charity we say to our brethren of other denominations, who find fault with us for our doctrines, master first the difficulties of your own system, and then assist your neighbors.

In further pursuing this subject, we prefer giving our views not in the words of man's wisdom, but in the words of God. If we find the doctrine in the Bible we dare not reject it, whether it is consonant with our views of God's character or not; just as we receive ten thousand inexplicable truths in the natural world. Paul, in his second letter to the Thess., (ch. ii, v. 11, 12,) says: "For this cause God shall send them strong delusion that they should believe a lie; That they all might be damned who believe not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness." Jude, v. 4, "For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ORDAINED to this condemnation." In the first chapter of Romans, v. 28, speaking of the Gentiles, Paul says: "God gave them over to a REPROBATE MIND." "The Lord hath made all things for himself: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil."—Prov. ch. xvi, v. 4. "For the scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power in thee, and that my name might be declared throughout the earth. What, if God, willing to shew his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction," etc.—Rom., ch. ix, v. 17, 22. "Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be REPROBATES." "But I trust that ye shall know that we are not REPROBATES."—2d Cor., ch. xiii, v. 5, 6. (See also 2d Peter, ch. ii, v. 12, Mark, ch. iv, v. 11.) If these passages, to which many others might be added, do not teach the doctrine of Reprobation, then we would be thankful to any one for an explanation of them. Please tell us what they mean. When Job's children and servants were destroyed, and his property was carried away by the Sabeans and Chaldeans, Job recognised the hand of God in this affair, for he said: "the Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away." After the Saviour was put to death it was declared by the Apostles, (the record is in Acts, ch. iv, v. 27, 28,) that "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatsoever God's hand and his counsel determined BEFORE to be done." Here, then, the doctrine for which we contend, is so plainly taught, that even comment is useless. Let those who abuse and misrepresent these teachings, remember that they are but abusing God; and we rejoice to know that to him they are responsible. We have thus explained what is meant by the Decrees of God. We believe that "God has fore-ordained whatsoever comes to pass—that he has fore-ordained or purposed to save a portion of the human race, and that he has purposed to PERMIT another portion to live just as they wish, in sin, for which they are to be forever destroyed. Judge, whether these things are so. If so, God knows our future history—he knows the circumstances of our death, and he knows whether we will be prepared for heaven or hell. But how can God know these things with unerring certainty, if they are not to be as he knows they will be. Of course these things are hid from us; we know not our future history. This only we do know, and it is enough for us: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

OBJECTIONS ANSWERED.

IV. Before closing this subject, we are to notice some of the objections that are frequently urged against this doctrine, or rather against the word of God. It is a remarkable fact, and I call especial attention to it, that the objections sometimes urged against the Decrees of God, as taught by Presbyterians, are the very same that the Apostle Paul anticipated would be made against the doctrine as taught by himself in the ninth chapter of Romans, where the doctrine is clearly stated, proved, and illustrated. He represents the objector as saying, "Is there unrighteousness with God?" Just as some men now object, and say, well, if your doctrine is true, the very doctrine that the Apostle here teaches, then God is "unrighteous and more cruel than Satan." The Apostle further represents the objector as saying, if this doctrine is true, then it destroys the responsibility of man and of course his free agency. "Thou wilt say then unto me, why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will." To these and other objections commonly urged against this doctrine, for an answer, we might content ourselves, by giving the same withering rebuke to those who urge them, that the Apostle did to those he anticipated as thus objecting: "Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus?" But as our Armenian brethren urge objections against the Decrees of God, I deem it my duty to meet them, and I believe that many of the very objections that they urge against our doctrines lie with equal weight against their own.

First—Your attention will be directed to one of the objections anticipated by the Apostle, viz: If the doctrine of decrees is true, then God is an unjust being. To deal unjustly with any man is to treat him worse than he deserves. If God treats any of his creatures worse than they deserve, he deals unjustly with them; otherwise he does not. Are the elect treated worse than they deserve? Surely not. They are treated just the reverse—infinitely better than they deserve. Then they cannot accuse God of injustice. The non-elect have no reason to complain; for God only punishes them according to their sins. None have reason to complain that they are treated unjustly, because God passes them by, and leaves them free to sin, and then punishes them for sins wilfully committed. If fifty of our citizens should violate the laws of our land by committing the highest crimes known in law, would there be any injustice in punishing them for the crimes they wilfully committed. Certainly none. So God might have passed by our entire race, when we had sinned and wilfully transgressed his holy law, and there could have been no reasonable complaint. Surely no man will say that God was under obligations to give his Son for our redemption. Then Christ might have remained forever in the bosom of his Father, and still God would have been just. In that event, not one of our race could have been saved; so that God would have been just, even if he had not saved one of the human family. But, say some of our opposers, unless God saves all he ought not to save any, when all are equally guilty. So proud man may say, and even dictate to God and tell him what he ought to do. "Nay, but O man who art thou that repliest against God." If this objection is worth anything, it lies with equal weight against the Armenian system. We teach that God purposed to do from eternity just what they say he in fact does. They tell us, and not unfrequently in the most harsh and boisterous terms, that many will be forever lost in hell, while many will be saved. Why this

difference? Why are many lost? O, say our opponents, because some will not repent. Just what we teach; God foreseeing that many would not repent, determined to punish them for their sins. Why then charge Presbyterians with making God unjust, when we teach that God has determined to do the VERY THING that our very charitable opponents say that he in fact does do.

Second—It is objected, that if God fore-ordains whatsoever come to pass he is the author of sin. Some may say and think so, but Presbyterians neither say nor think so. We do not understand the term ordain or fore-ordain to mean fatality or physical necessity. When it is said that Christ “was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world,” we do not mean that he was under the physical necessity of dying or was compelled by fate to die. But this is our meaning when we speak of fore-ordaining an event. “It is to form such a purpose respecting it, as renders certain its future existence, through positive or permissive agency.” Now, does it follow that because God fore-ordained or purposed to save a portion of our race, and fore-ordained to PERMIT another portion to go on in sin, or to leave them to themselves to pursue their own course, that he is the author of their sins? Take an illustration: Suppose you knew that by preaching the Gospel to five men, one of them would repent and turn from sin, but you also knew that the repentance of that one would so enrage the others that they would curse the very God of their existence, and cruelly persecute the man that repented. Knowing these things with certainty, you determined to preach to the five men, and thus save one instrumentally; do you not at the same time decree, IN ONE SENSE, the CURSING and PERSECUTION of the others? and yet you are in no sense the AUTHOR OF THEIR WICKEDNESS. Because God enlightens some, and others are hardened by the use of the same means and God punishes them for the neglect and abuse of the means of grace, does that make God the author of sin? There certainly is a vast difference between the sun’s being the source of heat and light and being the cause of darkness. When the sun sets darkness follows, but would any man in his senses say, that the sun, which is the fountain of light, was also the fountain of darkness? So God is not the source of sin, but when he withdraws his presence and influence, sin invariably follows; but that no more makes God the author of sin, than the setting of the sun makes it the source of darkness.

But it is sometimes insinuated that this distinction between the EFFICIENT and PERMISSIVE decrees of God is not found in our standards, but is a modern invention. Read at your leisure, from our Confession of Faith, and you will find in the answer to the 19th question of the Larger Catechism, and in the 6th ch. of the Conf., sec. 1st, the distinction made between EFFICIENT and PERMISSIVE decrees. You will find the same distinction also made in the 3d ch. of the Conf., sec. 1st, and ch. 5, sec. 4; where also it is expressly denied that God is the author of sin. The same distinction has been made by Presbyterians in all ages. Augustine, more than twelve hundred years before an Armenian Methodist had an existence, made the same distinction that we do between the EFFICIENT and PERMISSIVE decree of God. See his work on the Trinity, book 3, ch. 4. Calvin made the same distinction; our Scotch brethren in their explanatory Catechism, published about a century ago, made the same distinction. Here is the extract:

“*Quest. 26.* How does the decree of God extend to things naturally and morally good?”

Ans. Effectively : because God is the author and efficient cause of all good.—Phil. ch. ii, v. 13.

Quest. 27. How does it extend to things morally evil ?

Ans. Permissively and directively only.—Acts, ch. xiv., v. 16.

Quest. 31. How do you prove that God cannot be the author of sin ?

Ans. From the contrariety of it to his nature and law," etc.

Does this look like making God the author of sin, or like a modern invention ? But Presbyterians are not alone in making this distinction. An eminent Methodist, Rev. Richard Watson, says : " It is obvious, that by nothing can we fairly avoid this consequence," (i. e. of making God the author of sin,) " but by allowing the distinction between determinations to do on the part of God, and determinations to permit certain things to be done by others." " A decree to permit involves no such consequences," as making God the author of sin.—Theology of Watson, vol. 2, page 424. Now hear Mr. Wesley's testimony on this subject. In his sermon entitled " God's love to fallen man," relative to the fall of Adam, he says : " Was it not easy for the Almighty to prevent it?" He answers : " It was undoubtedly in his power to prevent it ; for he hath all power, both in heaven and earth. But it was known to him at the same time that it was best, on the whole, not to prevent it." These eminent divines most sensibly admit the distinction that we make between the efficient and permissive decree of God. If, however, the Calvinistic view of this subject makes God the author of sin, the Armenian system does the same thing. Let us catechise an Armenian brother a little. *Quest.* 1. Do you believe that God knew when he placed Adam in the garden of Eden that he would sin ? *Ans.* Yes, God knowing all things past, present and future, knew that he would fall. *Quest.* 2. Had God power to prevent him from sinning ? *Ans.* Yes, for God is all-powerful. *Quest.* 3. If God knew that our first parents would sin and he had power to prevent it, but did not, did he not PERMIT it ? Yes, answers Watson and Wesley. This is Calvinism, and if it makes God the author of sin, then the Armenian system does just the same thing. (2)

Third—It is objected, that if this doctrine is true, the Atonement of Christ is not sufficient for the sins of the whole world. Presbyterians of this and of all ages, so far as we have their history, have taught that the Atonement of Christ was sufficient for the sins of the whole world. The reason why any are lost is because " they never truly come to Christ and therefore cannot be saved." (See Confession of Faith.) Calvin says the blood of Christ is sufficient for the whole world." (See Com. on John 2d chap.) The Synod of Dort says in chap. ii, sec. 3, of their proceedings : " The death of the Son of God is abundantly sufficient to expiate the sins of the whole world." We do not teach then that the Atonement is INSUFFICIENT for the sins of the world. Is there no difference then, (do you ask ?) between Armenians and Calvinists on this point ? They tell us that Christ died intentionally to save all men. This we deny. For if you say that Christ intended to save all men, you must take one of these two positions : 1st—Either that all men will be saved, or 2d—that Christ was defeated in his intentions. In other words, you are compelled to be either a Universalist or a Socinian. If you say that Christ was defeated in his intentions, you rob him of his most glorious attributes, and make him altogether such an one as ourselves. To suppose that Christ was defeated in his intentions, is to impeach his wisdom. If Christ is an all-wise being would he likely undertake what he could not accomplish ? Even men do not act with such folly as this—they never undertake anything when they (2)

know they will fail in accomplishing their end. To say, then, that Christ died intending to save all men, is to say that he had not wisdom enough to know that he would be defeated in his intentions. This position, also, takes from the Saviour fore-knowledge. If the Saviour knew before his death that many for whom he died would be lost, he certainly would not have died for them; for so far as they were concerned he would have died in vain. More than this, if one soul that he intended to save, should finally be lost, in this case the Saviour would be defeated in his intentions; and if defeated in one instance, he might be defeated in other instances, yea, in the salvation of every one, so that not one for whom he died might be saved. To say that Christ was defeated in his intentions respecting the salvation of one being, is to say that he may be defeated in every instance, and thus God may have given his Son to a cruel death without accomplishing any good end. Again, we say that the Atonement of Christ is sufficient for the sins of the whole world, and no one ever will be lost because of any insufficiency in the Atonement. Hence Presbyterians preach from such texts as these: "Ho! EVERY ONE THAT THIRSTETH, come ye to the waters," etc., Christ "by the grace of God should taste death for every man," etc. But this is a very different position from saying that Christ died intending to save all men; for then he either was defeated in his intentions or else ALL WILL BE SAVED. Whom, then, does Christ intend to save by his death? Presbyterians and the Bible say all who believe in him. If we mistake not, this is consonant with our Cumberland brethren, who say, in the 11th ch. of their Confession, section 4: "God, before the foundation of the world, determined to justify all TRUE BELIEVERS, and Christ did in the fulness of time, DIE FOR THEIR SINS," etc. The Book of Discipline of our Methodist brethren contains an article on this subject. If handed to me to read, and if I did not know that it was among the articles of their religion, and that they did not hold to such a doctrine, I would unhesitatingly pronounce it the production of a Universalist. The article is the twentieth, a part of which reads thus—"the offering of Christ once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for ALL THE SINS of the WHOLE WORLD, both original and actual." According to this article, Christ has made a perfect satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world. How, then, can any be lost, since a perfect satisfaction has been made for all sin? Our Methodist brethren tell us that the reason why many will be lost, is because they will not repent and believe on Christ. Is the want of either repentance or belief a sin? If you say not, then God will condemn no one for the want of either, for he does not condemn without sin. If you say the want of repentance or belief is a sin, then according to the above article a perfect satisfaction has been made for all sin, both actual and original. Take either horn of the dilemma, and the result is Universalism. Why urge objections against Presbyterianism, brethren, since objectionous quite as formidable lie against your own system: "First cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

Fourth—It is objected, that if this doctrine is true, there is no use of using the means ordained to Salvation. For, say our opponents, "if I am to be saved I will be saved—if I am to be lost I will be lost, do what I may." If this objection, that has no foundation in truth, and, to say the most of it, is puerile in the extreme, was not so often urged against Presbyterians, I would not notice it. The reply made by a venerable divine, of blessed memory, to an Armenian, who asked him if he was not one who believed "that what was to be would be," is a sufficient answer to this objection.

The reply was, "Do you believe that what is to be will not be?" As to the use of means, or second causes, our standards clearly teach that God has ordained, not only the end, but the means. (See Confession of Faith, chap. iii, sec. 1.) We teach a doctrine very similar to what we find in the Bible, in a number of places. At one place we are told that God had determined to destroy the earth by a flood, but that he determined to save one man and his family, not without, but by, the use of means or second causes; hence the determination also to build the Ark. God determined, and made known his determination, before-hand to save Noah and his family, and that too by the Ark as a MEANS, OR SECOND-CAUSE. So while it is the determination of God to save his people, it is also his determination to save them by the use of means. "What God has joined together let no man put asunder." Our views on this subject are clearly expressed in the 27th chap. of Acts, where we are taught that when Paul was on a voyage to Rome, the men of the ship on which he had embarked seemed about to be lost, so much so, that it is said, "all hope that we should be saved was taken away." But it was otherwise ordered by God, and he by the ministry of an Angel, informed Paul of his intentions and assured him of safety. But did Paul cease to use the means of safety, when he knew before-hand the intention of God to save himself and the ship's crew? No, when the sailors, who alone were capable of managing the ship, were about to "flee out of the ship" in the life boat, "Paul said unto the centurion and to the soldiers, except these abide in the ship ye cannot be saved." While the safety of Paul and the ship's crew was decreed, the means of their safety was also decreed. So when God decrees to save sinners he also decrees the means of salvation. Arminians contend that the Savior has made a perfect "satisfaction for all sin, actual and original," if so, we can make the same objection against their doctrine, and ask, why use the means? what necessity for them? since a perfect "satisfaction has been made for all sin actual and original?"

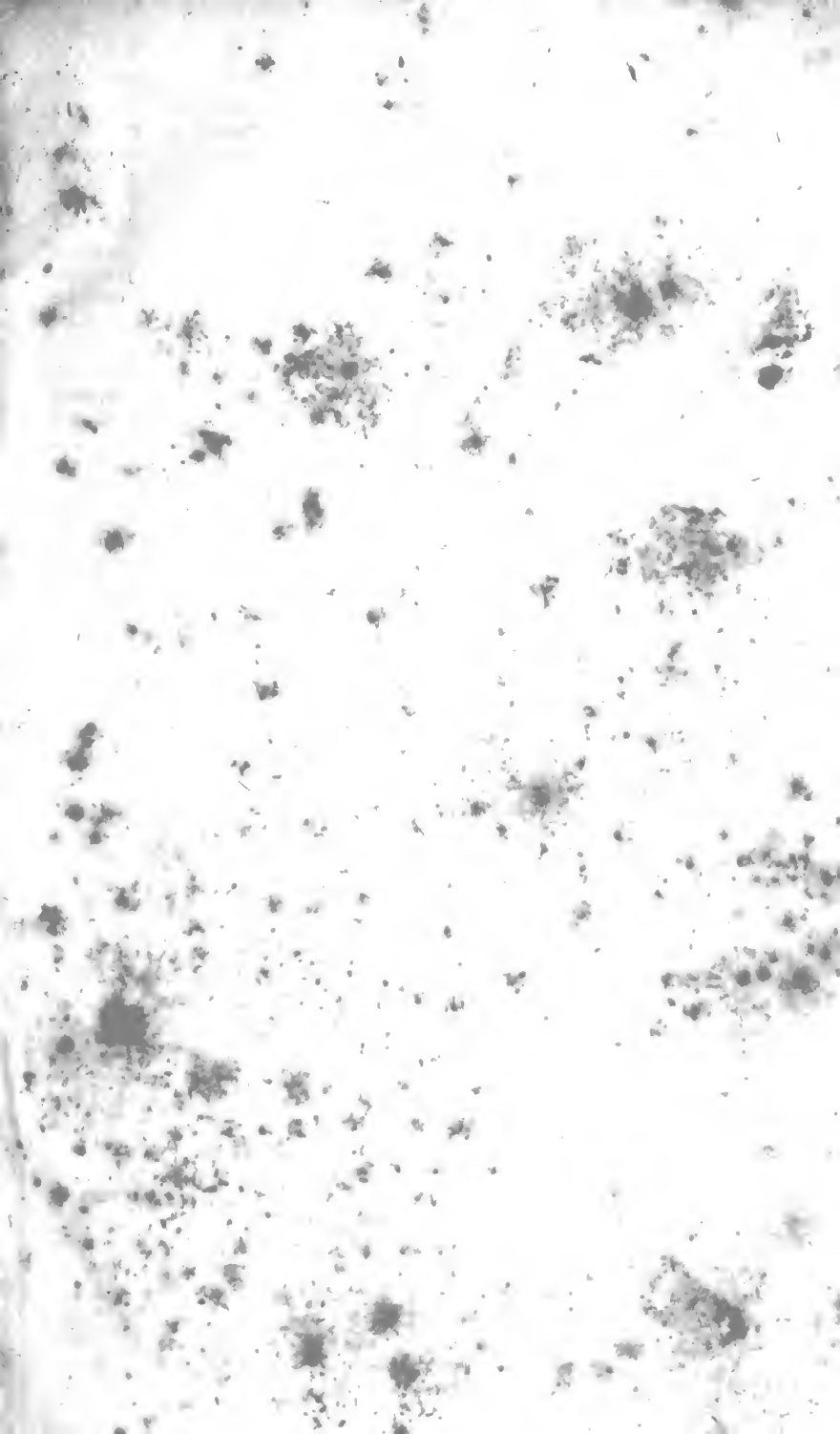
Fifth—It is objected to this doctrine, that it destroys the FREE AGENCY of man. Presbyterians do not so understand it. We believe in the decrees of God, and fully in the free agency of man. We teach both doctrines, hence our Confession says, that "violence is not offered to the WILL of the creature." (See Con. of Faith, ch. iii, sec. 1.) These doctrines are not inconsistent with each other. God makes the creature that he converts willing, in the day of his power; so that when he becomes a christian he does so willingly—and thus his will acquiesces in the will of God. Admit that we cannot reconcile the two doctrines, does that prove that either is false? Many truths are received that cannot be reconciled, by many who make this objection. Christians believe that there are three persons in the God-head; but who can understand this mystery or reconcile it with the idea of but one God? Shall we reject this doctrine because we cannot fully understand it? Why, then, reject the doctrine of decrees because we cannot fully understand it, when it is written on almost every page of God's word? Both doctrines are taught in the Bible. In the 2d chap. of Phil. we find both doctrines thus expressed: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure." Both doctrines are taught in the history of Pharaoh, King of Egypt. He was free in refusing to let the Children of Israel go out of his land—he was equally free in pursuing them to the Red Sea, and in attempting to cross it—and yet every act of his was but a link in a chain of events, that accomplished the decree or purpose of God. For it is said in Ex., ch. ix, v. 16, ch. iv, v. 21: "Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might shew my power

in thee." "I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go." The brothers of Joseph were free agents in selling him to the company of Ismaelitic merchants, and yet they were accomplishing the purposes of God, for Joseph says that "God did send me," that is, to Egypt.—Gen., ch. xlv, v. 7. He also said to his brothers: "But as for you, ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good."—Genesis, chapter 50, verso 20. The destruction of Babylon was not only fore-ordained but foretold. Many of the particulars were distinctly foretold that it was to be taken by an army of Medes and Persians, commanded by Cyrus. Cyrus was named by the Prophet more than a century before his birth. According to the prediction, when the time of Babylon's destruction was near at hand, Cyrus, with his army of Medes and Persians, was standing before the brazen gates and mighty walls of Babylon; and when the cup of her iniquity was full, Cyrus and his army entered the city and completely subdued it. Thus Cyrus did freely the very thing that God had long before said he should do. He did it probably without any knowledge of the fact that he was accomplishing the purposes of God. See Isaiah, 13th and 14th chapters, also 44th ch., v. 28, and 45th ch. 1st 4 v.; Jer. ch. 51, v. 29. The crucifixion of our Saviour affords a striking illustration of our views of this doctrine. All who were concerned in the trial and crucifixion of Christ acted as they did with perfect freedom. Yet it is expressly stated that they did "what the hand and council (of God) determined before to be done."—Acts, ch. iv, v. 27, 28. We also read in the 2d ch. of Acts, Christ "being delivered by the determinate council and fore-knowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain."

But there is not a difficulty that presses against this doctrine, that does not lie with equal force against the Arminian view. How can the fore-knowledge of God be consistent with man's freedom? Wesley in his Miscellaneous Works, vol. 3, page 219, answers the question like a candid christian, and says, "I CANNOT TELL." Must we then reject the doctrine of God's foreknowledge, because we are not able to reconcile it with man's free agency? O, no! say our Arminian friends. Why then reject the doctrine of divine decrees, because you cannot reconcile it with man's free agency? Truly, some of our Arminian brethren remind us of an ancient people that shot arrows at the moon, which fell back upon their heads and smote them to death.

Some of the objections that are frequently urged against the doctrine of divine decrees have thus been briefly answered. It is sometimes said that this doctrine is unprofitable, and ought never to be preached; but my commission does not so read. "I charge thee before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing, preach the word; exhort with all long-suffering and DOCTRINE; for the time will come when they will not endure SOUND DOCTRINE. ALL scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is PROFITABLE FOR DOCTRINE," etc.—Paul to Timothy. Is that an unprofitable doctrine that leads the sinner to feel his entire dependence upon God for salvation — that compels him to renounce his own righteousness and seek a better one than his own, even the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ?

It is not the love or desire of controversy that has induced me to present this subject; but the love of truth and a sense of duty. The very doctrine that I have thus discussed, was called from a pulpit in this town by way of ridicule, "A DOCTRINE FIT FOR DEVILS IN HELL TO SNEER AT." Is this true? Who will undertake to prove the truth of this assertion? "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say!"



















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Antony



